

THE THIRD ROTATION:

(SC-44-90): 13th Michigan Volunteer Infantry Regiment

(Presentation flag; Georgia campaign; example of a “regimental” flag)

“Presented by the Citizens of Kalamazoo To the Thirteenth Michigan Infantry” this now tattered banner once read. This regiment was mustered in at Kalamazoo in January 1862. So quickly did they leave for the field that the city had no chance to present the set of colors they had ordered from New York. Instead the flags--including a national “stars and stripes” and this “regimental” with the Michigan coat-of-arms--was forwarded to the regiment in Tennessee. This flag was with the regiment during its fiercest battles--Perryville, Stone River, Mission Ridge, and Chickamauga, where three color bearers fell and half the Thirteenth fighting that day were killed, wounded or missing in action.

Among those mustered into the Thirteenth was First Lieutenant Willard Eaton of Otsego. He was promoted rapidly, becoming a captain in 1862 and a major the following year. In October 1863, after Chickamauga, he wrote his niece: “You speak of guarding the flag. Now I am aware that thousands of people have but little thought about a flag, or that it is of any importance. Let such take the field and go forth to battle under a flag and bear it through the storm of death until half their number have fallen under its folds and then they will be prepared to appreciate it.” Eaton would experience what he wrote. Shortly after he was promoted colonel he was killed in action at Bentonville, North Carolina.

The flags were returned to Kalamazoo in 1864 when the regiment went home on veterans furlough. Eventually the flags were “delivered for deposit with the other war flags in the State Capitol,” according to Adjutant General John Robertson in 1882.